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Seoul Police Stop Rallies By Militants

Clashes Erupt on Eve Of March to Border

By Peter Maass
 Special to The Washington Post

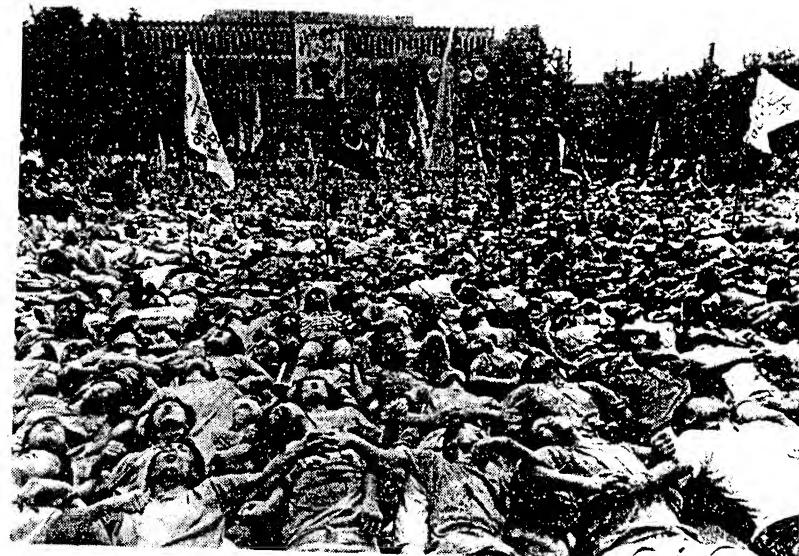
SEOUL, Aug. 14—South Korean riot police used tear gas and physical force today to stop militant students from holding rallies in support of a banned march to the border Monday for reunification talks with North Korean students.

Several thousand students here tried to stage protests that were put down by helmeted riot police, who sealed off rally areas and arrested students chanting antigovernment and anti-American slogans. The police were seen hitting and kicking some students who were not trying to resist arrest.

The clashes are expected to continue Monday when students attempt to march to the border village of Panmunjom for talks with their northern counterparts on reunifying the peninsula, divided since the end of World War II. The students are also demanding a withdrawal of the more than 40,000 U.S. troops here, and they oppose the Seoul Olympic Games because North Korea was rejected as a cohost.

The Seoul government is mobilizing tens of thousands of riot police to block the banned march because it believes all contacts with the communist North should be conducted through official channels. President Roh Tae Woo said last week that such protests were a threat to the security of the Olympics and would be stopped.

The government here is worried that the protests will frighten tourists away from the Olympics, which



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Student demonstrators sing antigovernment song at Yonsei University during a protest yesterday broken up by police.

open Sept. 17. Travel agents in the United States and other countries have reported lower-than-expected Olympic bookings, seen as a result of fears over the protests and potential terrorism by North Korea, which is boycotting the Games.

Student protesters have indicated that they do not intend to disrupt the Games, although they have vowed to fight back if police use force to break up peaceful protests and seminars they plan to hold during the Olympics.

The students gathering for the march at Yonsei University, the center of student activism, appear to number fewer than 4,000—a tiny fraction of the 1 million students nationwide. Although the militants drew wide support in past years for demonstrations against the country's authoritarian leaders, last December's direct presidential election appears to have dampened their appeal and left them isolated.

Today, several protests were held against the student militants by war veterans and shopkeepers, who said the antigovernment demonstrations were embarrassing the country. The militants claimed that the counterdemonstrations were organized by the government.

The students, who distrust the government's handling of relations with the North and do not believe that positive results will come from a North-South meeting scheduled for Friday, failed June 10 to mount a similar march to Panmunjom. That march was stopped by a force of 60,000 riot police, who used tear gas and physical force to block it. Much the same is expected to happen Monday.

Clashes were reported today at several locations in Seoul. At Yonsei University, police swooped down at midday on hundreds of students chanting antigovernment slogans outside the university gates.

The students, many of whom were sitting down, were caught in a choking volley of tear gas. The police kicked and punched some students and hit them with their shields, normally used to deflect rocks.

The students retreated behind the university gates and returned hurling rocks and molotov cocktails. The heavily padded riot police responded with more tear gas, and the clash died out.

[In an apparent effort to demonstrate the government's openness to reconciliation with the North, President Roh said on Monday, "I propose to President Kim Il Sung of North Korea to meet with me for talks at the earliest feasible date to work out practical ways to bring about national integration in response to the yearning of our 60 million compatriots." South Korean leaders have on previous occasions proposed summit meetings but none has taken place.]